



San Diego City Attorney CASEY GWINN

MEDIA RELEASE

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CHICARITA CREEK WILL BE RESTORED AFTER CHEMICAL SPILL

San Diego, CA (December 19, 2000) — Environmental damage to an urban creek in the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve will be repaired as a result of a lawsuit filed by the San Diego City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit and settled in San Diego Superior Court today.

The environmental protection lawsuit alleged that the Chemical Transfer Company of Stockton, California failed to follow standard safe operating procedures during delivery of a hazardous chemical in February 1999. In a civil complaint, the City Attorney alleged that on February 17, 1999, a driver unloading ammonium hydroxide from a tanker did not ensure that the tanker's top release valve was closed. Approximately 200 gallons of the hazardous chemical were dumped into a storm drain that flowed into Chicarita Creek, in the Saber Springs area of San Diego. This creek flows into the Los Peñasquitos Lagoon. Ammonium hydroxide is a caustic, colorless liquid that is destructive to plant and animal life.

Investigators from the California Department of Fish and Game, the City of San Diego's Stormwater Program, and the San Diego County Hazardous Materials Incident Response Team responded to the scene of the spill after receiving a call regarding the incident. Chicarita Creek suffered significant environmental damage, which included the destruction of all aquatic wildlife in a one-quarter mile area of the spill.



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In the settlement, Chemical Transfer Company agreed to pay \$68,289 in civil penalties, litigation and investigation costs, and restoration expenses for the creek. The settlement provides funding to conduct an ecological assessment of the creek, restore the creek to its natural state, and perform projects that will enhance the survival of animal species native to the creek. A non-profit organization, Friends of Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve, will oversee the creek restoration.

The judgment also requires Chemical Transfer Company to refit all of its fiberglass tanks with new valves to protect against spills in the future and to equip each tanker with written procedures for loading and unloading hazardous chemicals.

“Chicarita Creek is important because it is one of several urban creeks that run into the Los Peñasquitos Canyon Preserve. The health of these water channels is critical to the quality and well-being of the plant and animal life that is enjoyed by all San Diegans,” City Attorney Casey Gwinn said.

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